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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

May 14, 2003

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**MASSACHUSETTS MAN SENTENCED TO 25 YEARS ON “CRACK” COCAINE
AND FIREARMS CHARGES**

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE: United States Attorney Tom Colantuono announced that Carlos Lopez, Jr., of Lawrence, Massachusetts, was sentenced today by Federal District Court Judge Steven J. McAuliffe to consecutive terms of twenty (20) years on “crack” cocaine distribution charges and five (5) years on one count of possessing a firearm during and in relation to a drug trafficking offense. The 20 years drug sentence represents a statutorily mandated minimum sentence under federal narcotics laws and was imposed due to the fact that Lopez had previously been convicted of a cocaine trafficking felony. Federal law also mandates a consecutive minimum mandatory 5 year sentence if a firearm is used in relation to the drug-trafficking offense. The defendant was convicted of the offenses by a jury on February 13, 2003.

This case stemmed from a joint investigation in the spring and summer of 2001 led by the Drug Enforcement Administration and involving the Portsmouth Police Department, the Somersworth Police Department, the Rochester Police Department, and the New Hampshire Attorney General’s Drug Task Force. In early May, 2001, agents received information that Lopez was the source of supply of a woman who was distributing “crack” cocaine in the Portsmouth and Somersworth area. After a two- month undercover investigation, agents arrested Lopez and the woman in a 1992 Dodge Caravan being driven by the defendant and which at the time was parked in the lot of the Beechstone Apartment complex in Portsmouth.

During the search of the van, Portsmouth Police canine unit “Turbo” alerted aggressively on the front passenger seat, indicating the presence of cocaine. DEA agents eventually located an after-market wire under the front carpet leading to a secret compartment built into the floor of the van. In the secret compartment agents found a plastic box containing over 63 grams of “crack” cocaine packaged for distribution. Also in the secret compartment was a loaded .40 caliber Smith & Wesson semi-automatic handgun.

The woman, Terri Tremblay of Somersworth, previously pleaded guilty to “crack” cocaine distribution charges and is expected to be sentenced June 18, 2003.

The United States Attorney expressed his gratitude for the superior cooperative effort of the many agencies involved in this investigation. U. S. Attorney Colantuono stated: “Ridding our streets of the scourge of “crack” cocaine has always been a priority of this office, and there is no finer example of the successful work that can be done on a cooperative basis than this case. Furthermore, the agents involved are to be thanked personally for taking down a drug dealer who carried a loaded firearm to promote his illegal business.” This case was prosecuted by Assistant U. S. Attorney Mark Howard.